

LAWYERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES – MARCH 7, 2022

The Lawyers Advisory Committee met at the Park Chateau, where the meeting was convened by Chair, Thomas R. Curtin at 6:00 p.m., and the following occurred:

1. The Chair invited a motion to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2021 meeting. The motion was made and seconded and the minutes were approved.

The Chair requested that members introduce themselves.

2. Chief Judge Freda L. Wolfson's Report:

After welcoming all new member appointments, the Chief Judge commented as follows:

The Court welcomes four newly appointed Magistrate Judges, Jose Almonte, who sits in the Newark vicinage, Rukhsanah Singh, who sits in the Trenton vicinage and Sharon King and Matthew Skahill, who both sit in the Camden vicinage. A new Magistrate Judge was selected for the final Camden vacancy and the Court will make the official announcement on selection after the background check has been finalized.

The Court also looks forward to onboarding nominated District Judges, Georgette Castner, who will sit in Trenton and Evelyn Padin, who will sit in Newark. Both currently await senate confirmation.

Chief Judge Wolfson welcomed Susan Smalley, Chief of Probation, to the Committee.

Chief Judge Wolfson announced the AFBNJ Judicial Conference will be held at Forsgate Country Club on March 17, 2022.

The current courthouse COVID protocols remain in effect for now. Masks are still required and either proof of vaccine or negative PCR test are needed to enter the building. Continued protocols are necessary because jurors are excluded from the vaccination requirement. An upcoming Court Security Committee (CSC) meeting will be scheduled to discuss any amendments to the protocol and will be presented to the Board of Judges for decision at the upcoming March 29, 2022 meeting.

3. Chief Judge Michael Chagares' Report:

Chief Judge Chagares announced that Arianna Freeman will replace Judge Theodore McKee. She will be the first woman of color to sit on the 3rd Circuit, if confirmed. It is hoped she is voted out of committee soon.

Chief Judge Chagares discussed several upcoming Circuit rule changes affecting extensions of time, counsel focus letters and the roll back of filing deadlines.

Chief Judge Chagares announced the Court of Appeals for the 3rd Circuit will sit in Newark the first week of December. All law clerks are invited and encouraged to attend.

The historical society is creating a Court History Book working with Mark Lerner.

The Court of Appeals is holding live arguments but if counsel is uncomfortable, he/she can move for remote hearings.

Judge Chagares announced that 3rd Circuit Judges may sit by designation on District Court cases and because the District Court's caseload is heavy and the Court of Appeals caseload is down by half, they will assist with cases.

Chief Judge Chagares made several announcements of upcoming events including an essay contest for 5th and 6th graders which closes at the end of March, a court retreat to promote the collegiality and traditions of the court, an opening for 3rd Circuit head librarian, Judge Joseph A. Greenaway's portrait hanging in Newark scheduled for November 10, 2022, a 3rd Circuit Panel discussion with Judges Patty Shwartz, Joseph Greenaway and Paul Matey, on April 29, 2022, which, while fully booked, can be livestreamed, and in early May, 2023, the 3rd Circuit conference which will be held in Philadelphia.

4. U.S. Attorney Philip R. Sellinger provided his report. He acknowledged and thanked his transition team, especially Paul Fishman, Craig Carpenito and Rachael Honig. He announced his new leadership team, including Vikas Khanna, First Assistant. The remainder of the team will be announced soon, with value placed on diversity. The priorities of the office are civil rights, white collar crime (including health care fraud, cyber/crypto. crimes and securities fraud) and gun violence (violent actors and organized activity.) He discussed federal court trials and how many young assistants have not been able to conduct trials due to COVID and announced the U.S. Attorney's Office is hiring with an emphasis on hiring the best, diverse, candidates.
5. Assistant Federal Public Defender, K. Anthony Thomas, announced prisons are slowly reopening. Essex County Correctional Facility is still somewhat restricted requiring 24 hours visiting notice. The Office of the Federal Public defender is hiring and seeking intelligent individuals.
6. Chair Thomas Curtin introduced New Jersey Acting Attorney General, Matthew Platkin, who thanked everyone for their warm welcome to the Committee and provided his report. He announced on the state side there has been a rise in crime, particularly violent crime although progress has been made over the past few years in terms of restoring faith and confidence in the law enforcement system. The priorities of the office are hiring and expanding what has been built upon, particularly in the area of affirmative civil litigation.
7. Justin T. Quinn, reported on behalf of the Title subcommittee charged with reviewing the local rules to expand references therein to "Judge" to include magistrate judge, as well as district judge. He indicated revisions need to be made to some of the local rules after soliciting responses from the Lawyers Advisory Committee and the Clerk's office. A motion was made to adopt the revisions which was seconded. The Board of Judges will review at their March meeting and, once approved, revisions will be adopted.

Chief Judge Wolfson acknowledged Clerk's office employee, Marie Quinn, as being instrumental in combing through the local rules for references to the term Judge.

8. LAC member, Dennis Gleason, provided a report on post-COVID programs. He raised concerns that, due to COVID, lawyers have been unable to get together on a federal level, some lawyers have never met the new judges and there is uncertainty over the future operations of the court. He submitted recommendations including holding break-out sessions with judges and/or a presentation by judges regarding the operation of the court. Several members identified upcoming events for networking opportunities including upcoming Brown Bag Lunches (all courthouses), the AFBNJ Judicial Conference at Forsgate, on March 17th, the Brennan dinner on June 15th, the NJ State Bar Association's annual meeting and conference in May, and the June swearing-in ceremonies for new District Court Judges. Other proposed events included brown bag lunches for lawyers under 35 years old and a Young Lawyers Division spring event with Judges to be invited.
9. In closing, the next meeting date was announced as June 6, 2022 and new members were informed that LAC meetings are scheduled to coincide with Board of Judges' meetings which take place in March, June, September and December each year.

Respectfully submitted,

Melissa E. Rhoads